

The Sceptre of Wisdom

Nagarjuna — ADVICE · Nagarjuna

source: https://web.archive.org/web/20060308195802/http://gileht.tripod.com/Nagarjuna_Prajnadanda.txt

The Staff of Wisdom

(Prajnadanda)

(Lugs kyi bstan-bcos shes-rab sdong-po)

by Nagarjuna

#1.

Harmful people should be tamed;
The wise should be revered.
Fill your treasury with honest deeds,
And protect your fellow men.

#2.

If you guard as your own child
Both yours and others' secrets,
All earthly things become equal
And love for man your principal affection.

#3.

If your spouse is untrue and your friend untrue,
If your king is untrue and your relatives as well,
If your neighbor and your country are also corrupt,
Abandon them for a distant land.

#4.

Avoid a friend who is greedy for wealth;
Avoid a partner who is fond of fornication;
Avoid a doctor who is unskilled
In curing disease.

#5.

Though you may know good from bad,
Proceed only after consultation.
If you but partially succeed,
You are yet to be admired.

#6.

Those who speak with discretion
Are respected by mankind,
As the sun, emerging from the shadows,
By its rays creates great warmth.

#7.

In practicing the Dharma, though you may suffer,
Let not your mind be anxious.

When the moon has been eclipsed,
Will it not freely shine again?

#8.

Just as for altar garlands
Only full-blown flowers are gathered,
So a gardener does not
Prematurely uproot the plant.

#9.

Rewards and royal favors,
A prostitute and a pupil's praise,
The hire of a boat and the rent of a dwelling—
These six are easily obtained.

#10.

A magic spell misunderstood is poison.
Indifference to illness is poison.
An old man with young women is poison.
A poor man's sleep in the daytime is poison.

#11.

If a worthy man who does not make many promises
Makes a promise under pressure,
It is like a carving on stone:
Even should he die, it is not altered.

#12.

On occasion you will come to terms with your enemy,
And on occasion you will quarrel with your friend.
Having learned to distinguish what should be done and what not,
The clever man selects his opportunity.

#13.

If your speech is careless, you will be caught
Like the parrot, the singing bird, and the waterhen.
The skill of the water duck,
Which man does not catch, is in keeping silent.

#14.

By keeping your weapons in order, your enemy will be subjugated.
By wearing poor clothes a woman's vanity will be subdued.
By treatment illness will be stemmed.
By effort ignorance will be swept away.

#15.

Keep your resolves to yourself,
Like a jewel which lies hidden in mud.
If its sprouts did not attract attention,
Who would find the lotus root?

#16.

Although one perceives non-existent reality,

Who can believe in its non-existence?
How could a painted peacock
Devour real pearls?

#17.

If one is plotting evil,
He always uses pleasant words.
When a hunter sees the game,
He sings a sweet song to lure it.

#18.

Whatever your intention,
Impress it clearly on men's minds:
Thus are they brought under control
As if by a wish-fulfilling gem.

#19.

It is easy to live by carrying the loads of others.
It is easy to dress in tree-bark in the forest.
It is easier for men to die
Than to spend their days in quarreling.

#20.

The nature of man is to promote harmony.
Of what value is wealth gained by contention?
Of what use is wealth and life
Obtained by pride and violence?

#21.

He who undertakes work he cannot complete,
Who shares views with the multitude and disputes with the powerful,
Who babbles his thoughts to others—
The Lord of Death sits at his door.

#22.

Look not to an evil ruler;
Look not to deceitful relatives;
Look not to a lustful partner;
Look not to a doer of harm.

#23.

Why should a man who can go anywhere
Be injured through attachment to his native land?
A stupid man says, "This is my own well,"
And saying thus, drinks brackish water.

#24.

A highly learned man
Has two sources of happiness—
Hither he abandons all earthly interests
Or else he possesses much which could be abandoned.

#25.

A holy man whose glory has left him
And whose efforts have become meaningless,
Having become thus impoverished,
Is unhappy except in a forest.

#26.

The career of a sage is of two kinds:
He is either honored by all in the world,
Like a flower waving its head,
Or else he disappears into the silent forest.

#27.

Life, which perishes in a moment,
Has as its essence
Exhaustion and want of development.
Therefore, remain modest in the midst of it all.

#28.

An anthill increases by accumulation.
Medicine is consumed by distribution.
That which is feared lessens by association.
This is the thing to understand.

#29.

An anthill and understanding the teaching,
The waxing moon, 'til full,
The possessions of kings and beggars—
These increase by gradual accumulation.

#30.

Do not be excessively covetous,
For greed leads eventually to pain.
One who is led by greed is like the fox
Who was killed by the poisonous arrow
when trying to devour the bow.

#31.

He who pursues people for what they can give,
And yet pays no heed to those who have offered much,
Is like the man who thinks only of the butter to come,
And pays no heed to what has already been churned.

#32.

Do not rely on the opinions of others or seek excessive fame;
Rather, look carefully and judge for yourself.
Be not like the forest animals who quickly flee
At the first cry of one frightened by the dropping of fruit.

#33.

Do not hurt the feelings of others
Or speak in an injurious way.
The good man and the armed enemy

Each become known.

#34.

Even if the son of his enemy speaks sweetly,
The wise man remains on guard.
A poisonous leaf retains its potency,
And can cause injury at any time.

#35.

Whoever benefits his enemy
With straightforward intention—
That man's enemies will soon
Fold their hands in devotion.

#36.

In desiring to injure your enemy,
Praise his inherent good qualities.
Do evil thoughts of retaliation
Injure oneself or one's enemy?

#37.

Be firm rather than mild.
Temper the unruly with suitable strength—
If the children are not diligent,
The beneficent father threatens punishment.

#38.

As long as you watch the way,
As long as your steps are steady,
As long as your wisdom is unimpaired—
So long will you reap profit.

#39.

If you always seek your own advantage,
What is the use of remaining among men?
A selfish man frustrates every chance
To make all beings rejoice.

#40.

To seek from others and yet wish for good food,
To spend your life in begging and yet have great pride,
To be ignorant of literary works and yet wish to dispute—
These three make you ridiculous to others.

#41.

The fire which burned the forest
Became the companion of the wind.
But just as the wind extinguished the fire,
The weak man loses his friends.

#42.

Not doing harm to others,
Not bowing down to the ignoble,

Not abandoning the path of virtue—
These are small points, but of great importance.

#43.

Having no fear of disease,
Endeavoring to associate with the wise,
Not using the language of the vulgar—
A day spent thus is greater than a hundred years.

#44.

Whenever the mean find a little wealth,
They despise others and are filled with pride.
But the virtuous, though they prosper,
Remain bowed like tall grass.

#45.

When the lowly become wealthy or learned,
They think only of quarreling with others,
Like the fox who fell into a vat of indigo
And claimed to be a tiger.

#46.

When possessed of wealth or learning,
Low people become proud.
But even when doubly honored,
The wise become more humble.

#47.

Despising to beg even though poor, delighting in lustful action,
Trading without profit, quarreling with leaders,
Using rough language to young women—
These five are improper conduct in a man.

#48.

The peacock, though scorched by the heat in the summer,
Would rather stand proudly and hope for rain
Than bend its neck
To the muddy water of the pond.

#49.

A proud bird preserves its own life
By living on dew drops,
For it fears being placed under obligation
And will not beg even from the gods.

#50.

If you understand Truth, why have a teacher?
When the disease is cured, why call a doctor?
After the water is crossed, what use is a boatman?
To a man without passions, what use is a sorcerer?

[To him who knoweth the True Nature of things,
What need is there of a teacher?

To him who hath recovered from illness,
What need is there of a physician?
To him who hath crossed the river,
What need is there for a boat?]

#51.

As long as a wicked man is weak—
That long is he naturally good;
Like the waters of a river in autumn
Which can be easily crossed by everyone.

#52.

If anything is much discussed,
All boast of their skill,
And as all wish to be placed foremost,
That gathering produces nothing.

#53.

Copulation or sleeping by day,
Fresh beer, curds, and young people drinking,
Sleeping with withered old men or women—
These six waste bodily strength.

#54.

He whose anger causes no fear,
Who can confer no benefit when pleased,
Who can neither destroy nor subjugate—
What good is such a man's anger?

#55.

Encounter with misfortune and disease,
A time of famine, danger from one's foes,
Being at the king's gate or in Yama's home—
These affect all alike.

#56.

Because of desire, people strive for worldly things
Which are neither fitting nor right.
The calf, when the milk is exhausted,
Leaves its mother at a distance.

#57.

To be separated from the object of affection, to be much in debt,
To have contempt for one's own people, to associate with evil,
To be abandoned by friends who see one's poverty—
These five are not fire, yet still they burn.

#58.

He who does not attempt to make peace
When small discords arise,
Is like the bee's hive which leaks drops of honey—
Soon, the whole hive collapses.

#59.

He who has knowledge is firm.
The holy, though destitute, do not discard moral virtue.
Although scorched by the sun's rays,
The natural cold of snow remains.

#60.

Those blinded by desire do not perceive their offense.
The blind man does not see conventional shapes.
The proud do not perceive their faults.
The egotist does not perceive the Truth.

#61.

A conqueror, a water channel, a creeping plant,
A person motivated by grasping, and a blind man—
These five are led by the crafty
When placed in the power of others.

#62.

The misery which follows pleasure
Is the pleasure which follows misery.
The happiness and misery of mankind
Revolve like a wheel.

#63.

The invisible appears before you
And again becomes invisible.
What of it can you hold as yours?
And how could the invisible be the source of pain?

#64.

The logs of wood which move down the river together
Are driven apart by every wave.
Why should such inevitable parting
Be the cause of misery?

#65.

The wise conquer by strength, rather than anger.
The malevolent fail by their own rage.
How could such men as these
Join the society of the wise?

#66.

With great effort, a large stone
May be thrown to the top of a hill,
But with little effort it may be toppled over.
Our own faults and virtues are like this.

#67.

The man who meddles in matters
Which are none of his business
Will surely come to grief,

Like a monkey which only causes confusion.

#68.

He who forsakes his own interests
And interferes in those of others
Will surely be destroyed,
Like a king who abandons his kingdom.

#69.

An astrologer makes calculations and divinations
Concerning the motion of the moon and stars
But he does not divine that in his own home
His woman, being at variance, is misbehaving.

[An astronomer maketh calculations and divinations concerning
the motions of the Moon and the stars,
But he doth not divine that in his own household his own
womenfolk, being at variance, are misbehaving.]

#70.

Mistaking the moon's reflection in the still water,
You wished to seize the lotus root.
Oh, swan, who knew how to separate milk from water,
What has become of your knowledge today?

#71.

Any man who strives to do his best—
Whether his work be great or small—
Is considered to be doing
The work of a lion.

#72.

A ruler should not rely on his subjects
To protect his kingdom
Or overcome his plotting rivals,
But should personally attend to each situation.

#73.

He who says to himself, "who is the loved one and who the other,"
Who acts affectionately, magnanimously
And broadmindedly—such a man
Controls the whole earthly globe.

#74.

By always speaking pleasantly,
It is easy for a ruler to beguile his people.
As regards profitable words which are like medicine,
The speaker is rarer than the listener.

#75.

If you understand the meaning of the teachers
It is best to let your own conviction be your guide,
As when the beam of a balance is faulty when weighing,

Even though constructed by a noted craftsman.

#76.

A follower whose wealth is equal to his ability
And who both sees the essence of situations and works resolutely,
Is sure to cause you injury
As no enemy can.

#77.

If water be set on fire,
How is it to be extinguished?
If fear comes from the protector.
Who will protect from fear?

#78.

A drum, when not tuned, gives forth unpleasant sounds.
And even when tuned, the sound may not be sweet.
The world is like a drum;
It should be so tuned as to give forth a melodious sound.

#79.

A lord of the world, in passionate desire, does not discriminate benefit and injury.
He acts as he pleases, like a maddened elephant.
Tortured by remorse, he plummets over the precipice of despondency.
He blames others and ignores his own faults.

#80.

A king, in time of dispute,
Should preserve his life by abandoning his wealth-
Just as when the sheep-shearer clips the fleece,
The sheep thinks his spared life a great gain.

#81.

When there is a snake at the root and an eagle above,
Monkeys climbing in the branches and flowers surrounded by bees,
And when savage animals rest peacefully under its branches,
Then beware of such a sweet-smelling sandalwood tree.

#82.

Method is more important than strength,
When you wish to control your enemies.
By dropping golden beads near a snake, a crow once managed
To have a passer-by kill the snake for the beads.

#83.

He who has understanding is mighty;
Of what use is strength without understanding?
The hare killed the lion by wisely suggesting
That he look at his reflection in the well.

#84.

If you want to learn proper methods for your work,
Consult those who understand them.

With good methods your work will look well-done,
Even if you fail in gaining happiness or wealth.

#85.

The conduct of the virtuous is self-evident,
But how can it cure those who do harm?
Phlegm, which is brought on by hot spices,
Is only increased by their use.

#86.

The man against whom you feel anger in your heart
Is not to be admonished by mere words.
First, subdue him by force,
And then use your weapon of words.

#87.

When no danger has been encountered,
No danger is to be feared.
At a time of real danger, fear should be vanquished,
Like a mistake which is acknowledged.

#88.

When young, rejoice in the tranquility of the old.
However great your glory, be forbearing in your manner.
Boast not of what you know, even when learned.
However high you may rise, be not proud.

#89.

Those who delight in benefiting others
Are supreme like a lamp made of a light-giving jewel-
It relies not on oil, nor vessel nor wick,
And yet gives forth great light.

#90.

A doctor taking food and not digesting it,
A king speaking falsehoods, and
A man of good birth misbehaving himself—
These three are very unbecoming.

#91.

By association with the exalted,
Who would not become uplifted?
The thread which strings the flowers
Becomes a garland for the head.

#92.

He who preaches at the timely season
And speaks when opportunity arises
Will be very well regarded,
And will obtain worldly greatness.

#93.

He who possesses diligence, courage,

Might, wisdom, perseverance, and
The power to subdue others
Is feared even by the gods.

#94.

Trust not your defeated enemy,
Even though he wishes to become your friend.
A raven once lit a fire in a cave
To burn the owls who were gathered there.

#95.

In eating, sleeping, fearing, and copulating,
Men and beasts are alike.
Man excels the beast by engaging in spiritual practice.
So, without religion, would not man be equal to a beast?

[In eating, sleeping, fearing, and copulating, men and beasts
are alike;

Man excelleth the beast by engaging in religious practices,
So why should a man, if he be without religion, not be equal
to the beast?]

#96.

Those who speak ill of the spiritual life,
Although they come and go by day,
Are like the smith's bellows:
They take breath but are not alive.

#97.

One who leaves the patron, Buddha,
And bows to other gods
Is like a fool who, being thirsty,
Sinks a well on the bank of a lake.

#98.

Although you may remain in a country for a long time,
It is certain that you will have to leave;
Whatever may be the manner of parting,
The actual going cannot be avoided.

#99.

Compulsory separation
Brings excessive pain to the mind.
In giving up voluntarily,
Infinite peace and happiness descends.

#100.

One's desire to be attractive and happy
And to enjoy the pleasures of wealth,
Is like the foolishness of a drunken person,
Who, though healthy, must be carried.

#101.

There is no moral defilement equal to lust.
Nothing injures others like envy.
None is so fawning as a beggar.
There is no friend like generosity.

#102.

There is no eye like that of wisdom.
There is no night like spiritual darkness.
There is no enemy like disease.
There is no danger equal to death.

#103.

The worst of man's afflictions
Is death, which will surely come.
Therefore, turn your mind from desire
And rejoice in the Holy Dharma.

#104.

Generosity is the best friend,
And the Dharma is the most precious gem.
When common topaz is valued highly,
This will cause the ruin of the world.

#105.

Whatever there be on the surface of earth—
Property, gold, cattle, good health—
None of these truly satisfy man.
Tranquility arises from this understanding.

#106.

Wealth, hoarded with great pains
And brought out and admired at times,
Resembles the starving mouse who hoards his store—
Such wealth is only a source of misery.

#107.

Earthly life is not stable;
Wealth and enjoyment never last.
Wife and child will not endure,
So trust in the Dharma and follow its teachings.

#108.

A king is not satisfied with riches, nor the ocean with water.
Fire is not satisfied with wood, nor the wise with elegant sayings.
The world can never be filled with enough beauty,
Nor is it possible to satisfy a child's desires.

#109.

Moral conduct, self-restraint,
And control of the mind—
What else does one need
Who perseveres in these?

#110.

If you remain utterly content,
You may easily escape the grasp of harm.
Pleasures entwined by desire
Beget trouble at every step.

#111.

This body, full of faults,
Has yet one great quality:
Whatever it encounters in this temporal life
Depends upon one's actions.

#112.

The elephant is powerful, though he lives on grass.
The serpent, though he lives on air, is not lean.
The ascetic, who has only a little grain and fruit, has his needs fulfilled.
Thus modesty and contentment are enough.

#113.

Where is the solitary retreat,
With fresh water and no overgrowth?
Even the moon is a public light,
So what is the use of claiming something as 'yours'?

#114.

The safest possession is contentment.
It is not difficult to earn your livelihood
Where there are fruit, leaves, and water.
Nowhere are these not found.

#115.

The lion is king of the forest, and the elephant the master.
Let the grass provide your cushion, the tree-bark your garments,
The fruit trees your food.
For whom does this impoverished society provide a worthy life?

#116.

Of what attractions is wealth to one
Who keeps his body pure—
And adapts himself to what he has
In situations of good or bad?

#117.

With the great price of good actions,
The ship of this body has been brought.
So long as it is not wrecked,
Strive to cross the ocean of misery.

#118.

As long as the moon of prosperity is waxing,
And as long as Death does not knock at your door,
Continue to live chastely,

And let your actions benefit all.

#119.

When your eyes are fixed in the stare of unconsciousness,
And your throat coughs the last gasping breath—
As one dragged in the dark to a great precipice—
What assistance are a wife and child?

#120.

Even one whose passions are controlled and who rejoices at the happiness of others,
Who lives simply in the woods and pays homage to the Buddha,
Will someday have to discard his human body.
Salvation cannot be found through books or through freedom from bodily suffering.

#121.

If thoughts are controlled by wisdom,
Then liberation is very near.
To destroy the contamination of evil,
Of what use is shaving the head?

#122.

Wealth is not proper when
Acquired through great misery,
Through acts contrary to religion,
Or through bending before an enemy.

#123.

He who does not distinguish between proper and improper,
Who has abandoned all heed and observance of religion,
Who only wishes to be filled with good food—
What difference is there between such a man and a beast?

#124.

Fear of being decried by society causes misery
To the holy man who longs to act nobly.
The shameless man who acts perversely,
Not caring about the proper and
improper, is often happier.

#125.

The greatest source of virtue,
Both visible and invisible, is right knowledge.
Therefore, if you strive for virtue,
Take hold of wisdom in its entirety.

#126.

A hero is born among a hundred,
A wise man is found among a thousand,
But an accomplished one might not be found
Even among a hundred thousand men.

#127.

Knowledge is acquired by the wise,

Even in their old age.
Although in this life there may be no result,
In the future, good karma will surely come.

#128.

Even when one is white-haired and wrinkled,
Learning from others should be treasured.
Wherever the man of much learning may go,
He will never be overcome.

#129.

A king and an accomplished man
Are not alike.
A king is esteemed in his own country,
But an accomplished man is esteemed everywhere.

#130.

If an accomplished man has faults,
Philosophers do not grieve.
Although the moon may be obscured,
The wise look on it with pleasure.

#131.

There is no ornament like virtue,
There is no misery like worry,
There is no protection like patience,
There is no friend equal to generosity.

#132.

Though a holy man may live far away,
His virtues act as messengers.
By smelling the scent of flowers,
Bees are naturally drawn to them.

#133.

If you are truly persevering in virtue,
What is the place of a haughty attitude?
The cow which has no milk will not be purchased,
Even though equipped with a pleasant-sounding bell.

#134.

Our existence is short, the sciences are many.
We may estimate our life-span, but we do not know its duration.
Just as the swan separates milk from water,
Devote yourself totally to whatever you undertake.

[Time is fleeting, learning is vast; no one knoweth the
duration of one's life:

Therefore use the swan's art of extracting milk from water,
And devote thyself to the Most Precious Path.]

#135.

Though countless stars illumine the night

And the moon brightly ornaments the earth,
Only the sun provides light for the day
And gives meaning to the terms 'east' and 'west'.

[Although many stars shine, and that ornament of the Earth,
the Moon, also shineth,
Yet when the Sun setteth, it becometh night.]

#136.

The light of the sun dispels darkness
Wherever its rays extend.
Overshadowing all other stars,
It gives supreme light to the earth.

#137.

The man who accomplishes completely one single act
Excels all sentient beings.
The moon when full illumines the earth—
The multitude of stars have not this power.

#138.

The growth of moral virtues depends upon one's self;
The acquisition of property depends upon previous merit.
One may be mean or poor—
Why blame others for this?

#139.

Virtues are acquired through endeavor,
Which rests wholly upon yourself.
So, to praise others for their virtues
Can but encourage one's own efforts.

#140.

Many who understand the meaning of the scriptures
Are among the crippled.
It is a cause of rejoicing to find the sharp-pointed sword
By which the enemy is conquered.

#141.

Rich men are found among barbarians,
Many heroes among the beasts.
But holy men who can explain the truth—
These are the rarest of all.

#142.

Sandalwood trees do not grow on every hill,
And pearls do not come from elephants.
The learned who can explain the meaning of Truth
Are not found everywhere.

#143.

True knowledge is a virtue of the talented,
But harmful to those without discernment.

Spring water free of impurity,
Entering the ocean, becomes undrinkable.

#144.

The cultured delight in culture,
But the uncultured find no pleasure there.
The bees are attracted from the forest by the lotus,
But the frogs of the pond never notice it.

#145.

The fame of the sagacious,
Valuables belonging to experts,
Heroes in battle—
These increase among their own kind.

#146.

The swan does not belong among hawks,
Nor the horse among donkeys,
Nor the lion among foxes,
Nor a clever man among fools.

#147.

That which the great respect
May be considered base by the vulgar,
As a stupa to which the learned bow
Is used as a seat by the crow.

#148.

Though possessing great virtue themselves,
Holy men praise accomplishments of others,
While never proclaiming their own.
How remarkable is such noble conduct!

#149.

The virtues of the omniscient
Are comprehended only by those who know all.
The exact weight of the earth
Is known only to the serpent-god who supports it.

#150.

If people mutually advertise each other's virtues,
Even he who possesses none will acquire Some.
But he who proclaims his own,
Even though king of the gods, is not respected.

#151.

Why should a learned man
Traverse lands where learning is not respected?
What employment could a laundryman find
In a city of naked yogis?

#152.

Alas, this stupid world

Has not inspired personal initiative.
But imitating the doings of others
Is lost as metal in molten metal.

#153.

The fool prefers a buffoon to a learned man
Because he delights in laughter.
The buffoon acquires wealth
While the learned man goes empty-handed.

#154.

The sage passes his time
In beneficial spiritual practices.
By wasting this precious opportunity even on sleep,
111 consequences may arise.

#155.

He who makes no effort
To acquire the virtues of the holy,
And is frightened away at seeing his own mother's pain—
Of what value is it for him to be born into this opportunity?

#156.

The way of a wise man is knowledge,
The way of the cuckoo is a sweet note,
The way of the ascetic is patience,
The way of the ignorant is perversity.

#157.

The real meaning of the Dharma and of the sciences
And the essence of the holy mantras
Must be directly experienced.
Do not analyze merely the meaning of the words.

#158.

When the time of need arrives,
Knowledge contained in books
And wealth borrowed from others
Are neither knowledge nor wealth.

#159.

The accomplishments of a teacher of arts
Are but accomplishments for earning a living.
But the study of the termination of earthly incarnation—
Why should that not be the accomplishment?

[The science which teacheth arts and handicrafts
Is merely science for the gaining of a living;
But the science which teacheth deliverance from worldly existence,
Is not that the true science?]

#160.

Chosen truths should not be given

To any man without due scrutiny.
Once, a man was made homeless
By giving only a small place to a monkey.

#161.

Some teach, relying on words;
Others instruct without speaking.
The reed-flower has no fruit;
The walnut has both fruit and flower.

#162.

The fruit of the kataka tree
Clears the mud from water,
But if only its name is mentioned.
The mud will not subside.

#163.

Though a man be learned,
If he does not apply his knowledge,
He resembles the blind man,
Who, lamp in hand, cannot see the road.

#164.

The clever, the disciplined,
The contented and the truthful—
It is better for such to die
Than to share a kingdom with the wicked.

[With the wise and gentle, the contented and the truthful,
Companionship, even in prison, is better than sovereignty
with the unruly.]

#165.

In having recourse to the holy or impious,
Like the moon which waxes or wanes,
A little virtue may be increased
Or vast accomplishments may topple.

#166.

It is easier to have a learned man for one's enemy
Than to be friends with the stupid,
As the Brahmin who found no protection from the thief,
Or the king who was blinded by the monkey.

#167.

It is better to die learned,
Disciplined, contented, and truthful
Than to live in a kingdom
That is pervaded by wickedness.

#168.

Concerning a snake's venom and that of an evil man—
An evil man is more venomous than the snake,

For the snake's venom may be neutralized by drugs,
But what can counteract the venom of an evil man?

#169.

Although those who are wicked may have many talents,
They speak vulgar language, even when happy.
He who is learned is firm and dependable—
Although he becomes poor, he will not abandon virtue.

#170.

The naturally wicked man is shift
Like the scales of a balance—
A little thing sends him up,
A little thing sends him down.

#171.

Although smeared with sandalwood, musk and camphor,
The natural strong smell of garlic is not easily driven out.
Although many texts may be well studied,
One does not easily drive out the faults in one's disposition.

#172.

Lotuses do not grow on the face of a sage's son,
Nor do horns grow on the head of a prostitute's son.
But insofar as there was perversion in the act,
The result will be a bastard.

#173.

The words which are uttered may be different
Than the thoughts harbored in the mind.
Alas, then, for the crooked-minded!
Who can change their natural disposition?

#174.

In retaining vice and discarding virtue,
The wicked man resembles a strainer.
He assiduously retains his vices
And ever discards the moral virtues.

#175.

He who has been refuted by a wicked man
Loses confidence even in the holy.
When a child's mouth has been scalded by hot milk,
He drinks curds only after blowing on them.

#176.

Seeing the stars' reflection on the lake by night,
The swan is disappointed, mistaking them for lotus shoots.
So, even seeing a real lotus shoot by day, he will not eat it.
When once deceived by a liar, one will doubt even the truthful.

#177.

The appetite of one led by emotions is twice that of the wise;

His deceitfulness is four times,
His shame six times,
And his passions eight times as great.

#178.

Not by gifts nor by attention,
Not by worship nor by veneration,
Not by constant association nor by assiduity-
Can one led by passion be controlled.

#179.

When carried off by the King of the Birds,
The White Lotus Serpent God said:
"He who tells secrets to others
Loses his life soon after."

#180.

Just as those who steal another's husband or wife
Become the cause of all mischief,
Those who destroy one's goal and religion
Create an obstacle to the attainment of liberation.

#181.

If even one verse of truth
Is given by a Lama to his student,
This gift would be supreme.
A gift such as this exists nowhere on earth.

#182.

All desires should be abandoned;
But if you are unable to do so,
Let your desire be for salvation.
Thus will be found the cure.

#183.

The unhelpful relative is like a stranger,
But he who helps, though an outsider, is part of the family-
Like the body struck by disease
Which receives the beneficial medicine of solitude.

#184.

If you hold on your head attentively
A pot half-full of water,
The overflow will be as the anger
Of an evil man who is being respected.

#185.

Whatever is agreeable to your mind,
Although distant, is near.
That which is not kept firmly in mind,
Although by your side, is far away.

#186.

Though we may live together in society,
Like the water and the lotus there is no intimacy
Though sages may live far apart,
Like the moon and the lily, they admire each other at a distance.

#187.

Making bets, transacting money and business,
And speaking confidentially to women
Are three things to be avoided
By those desiring friendship.

#188.

When milk issues from a horn,
When the reed-flower produces honey,
When the lotus grows in dry ground,
Then will the deceitful speak truth.

#189.

A man of little virtue
Does not know how to use his wealth.
Like a thirsty dog that licks a glacier,
But cannot melt the ice.

#190.

Merchants and traders would not carry provisions
For a journey without proper payment;
But the poor, without being noticed,
Amass a hundredfold profit for the future.

#191.

Men give alms, since when we die
We leave our wealth behind.
It is wise economy to give alms, knowing that when we pass,
Our actions, like our property, abide.

#192.

Fearing impoverishment
The miserly never give alms.
But the learned man, knowing the danger of wealth,
Distributes his possessions to all.

#193.

Why not give half your food to the needy?
The desire and the reward
Which charity brings
Will be abundantly repaid in the future.

#194.

Be not grieved, though you see no results from your actions,
For you can still give alms from what you possess.
Flowers, fruit, leaves, water, and medicines
Can be made unlimited by the power of mental dedication.

#195.

It is an error to own wealth
Which is neither given away nor enjoyed,
For even though it is your property,
Of what use is it to you?

#196.

This is the place for action,
The beyond, the place for results.
Whatever may be done here,
Will certainly be enjoyed there.

#197.

Why be grieved at seeing the passing
Of the wealth, rank, beauty, or health of others?
If you desire these,
Then look to the fruits of virtuous actions.

#198.

If you have possessions but do not share them with others,
What is the use of keeping them nearby?
If a tree grows a fruit which is too bitter to eat,
How can it appease someone's hunger?

#199.

Giving alms which do no harm to others
Results in pleasure which cannot be carried away by flood,
Nor burned by fire, nor stolen by thieves.
Such possessions will never be destroyed.

#200.

He who does not try a remedy
For the disease of going to hell—
What will he do when he reaches that place
Where there is no cure to be found?

#201.

Holy men are bitten by the snake of words
Which comes from the pit of vicious men.
In order to transmute this poison
One should drink the medicines of patience and of wisdom.

#202.

Although you may spend your life killing,
You will not exhaust all your foes.
But if you quell your own anger,
Your real enemy will be slain.

#203.

The powerful are not eager to reform,
Therefore, why exercise patience with them?
With those who are disciplined and peaceful,

What need is there for patience?

#204.

If you become angry
Merely owing to an injury,
Then why not be angry with anger,
Which destroys your goal of liberation?

#205.

He who is disturbed
At seeing the excellence of others
Will not understand even a little Truth.
Such a person destroys his own merit.

#206.

Let all hear this moral maxim
And having heard it keep it well-
Do not do unto others
What is not pleasing to yourself.

[That which one desireth not for oneself,
Do not do unto others.]

#207.

Who does not seem wise
When speaking of leaving this mortal life?
But he who can practice such non-attachment
Is considered wise among sages.

#208.

Property is unstable, and youth perishes in a moment.
Life itself is held in the grinning fangs of Death,
Yet men delay to obtain release from the world.
Alas, the conduct of mankind is surprising.

#209.

He who has a good intellect but is lazy
Will never become exalted.
He is like a youthful writer
Who records his ideas in the sand.

#210.

If all sentient beings
Could perceive their coming death,
Not even food would have flavor.
What need to mention other things?

#211.

The Lord of Death does not wait to ask
Whether your works are completed or not.
Therefore, do tomorrow's work today
And this evening's work this morning.

#212.

As long as you are healthy and can produce a harvest,
Not ruined by the hail of disease,
And as long as your mind is keen and alert,
Use wisely this auspicious occasion to practice the Dharma.

#213.

What are wreaths of flowers to donkeys and cattle?
What is delicate food to four-footed animals and pigs?
Light to the blind or songs to the deaf?
Of what use is religious doctrine to fools?

#214.

As long as one is not ambitious,
His accomplishments will be great.
If great ambition be entertained,
How can virtue ever be acquired?

#215.

As long as a man does not beg, even when the time comes,
He is considered by others as a glorious ascetic.
Brave, clever, high, and manly
Are the terms used for a man, until he begs.

#216.

A sage's son may suitably die soon,
And a king's son suitably live long.
For a hunter's son life and death are equally unsuitable,
And for the saint's son equally convenient.

#217.

Of great value are those things
That exist to increase man's understanding.
Let the elegant classics be expounded
By one who understands the doctrines.

#218.

The teachings of elegant sayings
Should be collected when one can.
For the supreme gift of words of wisdom,
Any price will be paid.

#219.

The student of science, the hero,
And every beautiful woman,
Acquire great fame,
Wherever they may go.

#220.

A man of learning and a king
Are not comparable in any way.
The king is esteemed in his own country,

The wise man wherever he goes.

#221.

Whatever benefit one may give,
The wicked man is never grateful.
But do a small service to a holy man,
And you may command him for life.

#222.

The doings of fools are like ripples
Which on water are quickly effaced.
Those of a holy man, though small,
Are permanent, like carvings on stone.

[The foolish are like ripples on water,
For whatsoever they do is quickly effaced;
But the righteous are like carvings upon stone,
For their smallest act is durable.]

#223.

The evil man may speak sweetly;
Nevertheless, he is not to be trusted.
The peacock has a sweet note,
But for food it eats powerful poison.

#224.

Alas, the wicked man and
Mucus are really alike.
By gentleness they are excited
And by roughness they are soothed.

#225.

A wicked man, gold, a drum,
A wild horse, the ignorant, and cloth—
These are controlled by beating.
They are not vassals for elegant actions.

#226.

Association with a wicked person is unbecoming,
Whether he is pleasant or obnoxious,
Like being with a dog is unbecoming,
Whether you play with him or let him lick you.

#227.

Wildness is worse than a serpent.
By drugs and charms
A serpent's venom can be expelled,
But wildness cannot be banished.

#228.

The misdeeds of the undisciplined
Leave their mark on the mind.
Whoever mixes with the unruly

Becomes even more unruly than they.

#229.

Even without intention
A son imitates his father's conduct.
From a magic tree
One does not get sour fruit.

#230.

If my father, mother, brother, or wife
Imitate my actions,
Whatever sin I may commit,
It is as if they had committed it.

#231.

This earth, the mighty ocean,
And the mountains are not a burden.
But he who is ungrateful
Is indeed a heavy weight.

#232.

He who stays in the society of the moral
Rejoices in benefiting even evil beings.
Although Yama is the destroyer,
Wise men praise him very much.

#233.

In the society of the clever, the disciplined,
The contented, and the truthful,
Imprisonment is a superior state.
The sovereignty of the unruly is not thus.

#234.

He who is handsome, youthful, accomplished,
And born to a high family,
Like the blossom of the lilac tree,
Does not look well when split from his line of descent.

#235.

He who has a body but is devoid of learning,
Though of good birth, what use is he?
In the world, reverence comes from learning;
From lack of learning, destruction proceeds.

#236.

If you desire ease, forsake learning.
If you desire learning, forsake ease.
How can a man at ease acquire knowledge,
And how can an earnest student enjoy ease?

#237.

He who is no friend of knowledge
Will always be in misery.

He who is a friend of knowledge
Will always attain to joy.

#238.

What country is foreign to a sage?
Who is hostile to a pleasant speaker?
What load is heavy to a man in his own home?
What distance too great to the strong?

#239.

Because he who is earnest has friends,
The summit of Sumeru is not too high,
The earth's depths are not too low,
The ocean cannot separate him from his goals.

#240.

The man who has learned from books alone
And has not studied from many standpoints
Resembles a pregnant girl of loose morals—
He does not look well among his peers.

#241.

He who scorns the Lama
Who has given him even a single teaching
Will pass through a hundred dog-incarnations
And be reborn in a lower realm.

#242.

Sufficient wealth does not exist
To repay a Lama
Even for a single teaching
To his student.

#243.

He who imparts elegant learning,
He who teaches science, he who brings one up,
He who feeds one, and he who gives fearlessness—
These five are like fathers.

#244.

The wife of a king or a minister,
Likewise, the wife of a friend,
A brother's wife, and one's own mother—
These five are like mothers.

#245.

Counsel given to fools
Excites but does not pacify.
He who pours milk for a snake
Is only increasing its venom.

#246.

The fool who acts like a two-footed beast

Should be especially avoided.
For, like the unseen thorn,
The pain of his words can go deep.

#247.

When a fool sees another fool,
He is more refreshed than by the scent of sandalwood.
If he sees a learned man,
He jealously accuses him of parricide.

#248.

Intimacy in the society of the holy,
Conversation in the society of the learned,
And friendship with the unselfish-
These will cause no regrets.

#249.

Although for a very long time
You may not perceive the misery
Of this world and the next,
Yet bring your mind into harmony with religion.

#250.

Although a thing may afford enjoyment,
If the result be injurious, how can it be right?
If something upsets your health,
How could it be right to eat such a dish?

#251.

That which hurts but is profitable
Is drunk by the wise like medicine.
The result, afterwards attained,
Becomes in itself incomparable.

#252.

If a learned king
Were to summarize these teachings,
In the beginning, the middle, and the end
They would not appear other than elegant.

#253.

It is said that when the ocean is no more,
We can cross it even in the middle.
Whether holy men are present or not,
We should not transgress the moral teachings.

#254.

Thus ends the Commentary on Manners
Called The Staff of Wisdom,
Written by Pandit Nagarjuna.

[End]

Archived from gileht.tripod.com via the Wayback Machine · for the benefit of all beings